

C'est-clefts versus *il y a*-clefts in French
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1. INTRO. We contrast *c'est*-clefts (1), which are prototypically associated with a specificational (focus-background, value-variable) interpretation, and *il y a*-clefts (2), which prototypically introduce a new event or entity and have a presentational (all-focus) interpretation (see Lambrecht 1988/2001/2004).

(1) **Focus-background *c'est*-cleft**

Qui t'a donné ce cadeau? – C'est Jean qui me l'a donné.

(2) **All-focus *il y a*-cleft**

Il y a le facteur qui arrive. (based on Lambrecht 2002:63)

Whereas *c'est*-clefts have been well studied (see Doetjes et al. 2004), also on the basis of corpus research (Dufter 2008), *il y a*-clefts are relatively under-researched (but see Willems & Meullemans 2010, Choi-Jonin & Lagae 1997, Léard 1992, Giry-Schneider 1988) and have not often been described on the basis of corpus research. **2. GOAL.** We will first show that, contrary to what has often been assumed before, both *il y a*-clefts and *c'est*-clefts instantiate all three possible Information Structure (IS)-articulations (all-focus, topic-comment, focus-background; see Lambrecht 1994) (section 3). We will then examine the presuppositional nature of the clefted element (CE) (section 4) and the coda (section 5), showing that, contrary to what has been claimed before, (i) as for the CE, it is not the distinction between *c'est* and *il y a* that accounts for the different presuppositional nature of different types of clefts, but rather their specific IS-articulation, and (ii) concerning the coda, *il y a*-clefts behave differently from *c'est*-clefts, which could be explained from the semantics of *c'est* and *il y a*. Hence, the different properties of the different types of clefts stem from the interaction between their information-structural and semantic properties.

3. IS. 3.1. *Il y a*-clefts. We will first present the results of corpus research (in formal and informal written and spoken French: *Le Monde*, *Yahoo Q&A*, *CFFP*) showing (i) that, as has been argued for by Davidse (1999/2000) for English *there*-clefts, *il y a*-clefts frequently have a specificational (focus-background) articulation (3), in which the CE enumerates the values which satisfy the variable given in the coda, and (ii) that they can even have a topic-comment articulation (4), with a contrastive topic in Büring's (1997/2003) sense. To our knowledge, this has not been observed before.

(3) **Focus-background *il y a*-cleft**

Quelle est votre meilleure série du moment? – "How I Met Your Mother" c'est génial, y'a aussi "Lost" qui est bien (Yahoo)

(4) **(Contrastive) topic – comment *il y a*-cleft**

Ya les gens normaux qui doivent se levé a 10h ou midi et aller au lycée pour la rentré. Et ya moi qui doit se levé a 4h du matin pour aller a mon lycée sport étude ! (www) ~ Je dis à propos des gens normaux qu'ils doivent se lever à 10h, et je dis à propos de moi que je dois me lever à 4h du matin.

3.2 *C'est*-clefts. Apart from focus-background *c'est*-clefts (1), *c'est*-clefts have also been said to express all-focus (Doetjes et al. 2004) (5). Moreover, as for “informative-presupposition clefts” (Prince 1981) (i.e. “non-contrastive anaphoric clefts”, Blanche-Benveniste 2006) (6), we will argue that they have a topic-comment articulation, as Reinhart's (1981) tests (7) show:

(5) **All-focus *c'est*-cleft**

Sous le sommet en surplomb d'une falaise de la côte sud de l'Angleterre, (...), un peintre amateur attend, rêvant de pouvoir dessiner un corbeau d'une espèce rare. Mais soudain c'est une jeune femme qui tombe dans le vide sous ses yeux (www)

(6) **Topic-comment *c'est*-cleft**

[texte touristique sur Berlin] *C'est dans la section est, autrefois la partie soviétique, que j'ai été le plus charmé (...). De plus, c'est là que vous décèlerez les principaux clubs, bars et discothèques.* (www)

- (7) a. - *Que sais-tu à propos de la section est de Berlin?*
 - *C'est là que vous décèlerez les principaux clubs, bars et discothèques.*
 b. *J'ajoute à propos de la section est de Berlin que c'est là que vous trouverez les principaux clubs, bars et discothèques.*

The existence of these clefts, in which all the new information is in the coda, contradicts Doetjes *et al.*'s hypothesis that "we do not expect there to be a third type of cleft, in which all focused material would be located inside the coda".

3.3. Consequence. From 3.1. and 3.2. it follows that, surprisingly, both *c'est*-clefts and *il y a*-clefts can express all three possible IS-articulations defined by Lambrecht.

4. EXISTENTIAL PRESUPPOSITION OF THE CE. Whereas it has been argued that *specificational it*-clefts in English imply the existence of the CE (Reeve 2012), as far as we can tell, this has not been studied for French *c'est/il y a* clefts. **4.1. *Il y a*-clefts.** We will first show that in focus-background *il y a*-clefts (8), the existence of the CE is presupposed, but not in all-focus *il y a*-clefts (9) and topic-comment *il y a*-clefts (10), i.e. the paraphrases (9-10) are infelicitous in the same context as the cleft.

- (8) **Focus-background *il y a*-cleft: existence of CE is presupposed**
 (3) = *Au moins une série est bien* (variable), à savoir *LOST* (value).
 (9) **All-focus *il y a*-cleft: existence of CE is NOT presupposed**
 (2) ≠ *Au moins une personne arrive*, à savoir *le facteur*.
 (10) **Topic-comment *il y a*-cleft: existence of CE is NOT presupposed**
 (4) ≠ *Au moins une personne doit se lever à 4h*, à savoir *moi*.

4.2. *C'est*-clefts. In contrast with focus-background *c'est*-clefts (11), all-focus (12) and topic-comment *c'est*-clefts (13) do not presuppose the existence of the CE.

- (11) **Focus-background *c'est*-cleft: existence of CE is presupposed**
 (1) = *Quelqu'un m'a donné un cadeau*, à savoir *Jean*.
 (12) **All-focus *c'est*-cleft: existence of CE is NOT presupposed**
 (5) ≠ *Au moins une personne tombe dans le vide*, à savoir *une jeune femme*.
 (13) **Topic-comment *c'est*-cleft: existence of CE is NOT presupposed**
 (6) ≠ *Vous décèlerez les principaux clubs quelque part*, à savoir *à Berlin est*.

4.3. We conclude that it is not the opposition between *ce* and *il* that determines the presence/absence of the existential presupposition in both types of clefts, but the opposition +/- *specificational* (focus-background >< all-focus and topic-comment).

5. PRESUPPOSITIONAL NATURE OF CODA. Considering only focus-background and all-focus *c'est*-clefts, Doetjes *et al.* argue that the material in the coda is semantically presupposed, because of the embedded nature of the coda. This predicts the material in the coda of *il y a*-clefts to be presupposed as well, contrary to fact:

- (14) **Focus-background *il y a*-clefts**
 [Context: Q: Quelles séries sont bien?] A: – *Il y a Lost qui est bien*.
 a. – *Ce n'est pas vrai: Lost n'est pas bien, tous les critiques sont d'accord sur ça*.
 b. – *Il y a Lost qui est probablement bien*.

The application of the negation test (14a), as well as the presence or absence of epistemic modal markers in the coda (Haegeman 2006, Verstraete 2007, Lahousse 2010) (14b), shows that the coda is not semantically presupposed in all six types of clefts. In contrast, we will show that the presuppositional nature of the coda depends on the specific discourse semantics of *c'est* [which has been argued to have an exhaustive or contrastive interpretation, except in topic-comment *c'est*-clefts] and *il y a* [which can have an 'enumerative' or a contrastive interpretation].

References. Lambrecht, K. (2001). A framework for the analysis of cleft constructions, 39(3), 463–516.